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If you, like me, are the sort who often skips such dull matters as colophons, go back and read the few lines just above, because you will see an astonishing thing contained therein. Yes, that's a California address for Silverberg. Although I type this in the familiar confines of 5020 Goodridge Avenue, I expect to be living at 5 Pershing Drive in the Oakland hills by the time you read this, and to be receiving my mail at the post office box listed up there. Wonder of wonders!

I suspect my fascination with California began in 1949, when I joined FAPA -- a mere (choke! gasp!) 22½ years ago. Out of the west came Rotsler's MASQUE and other lively publications, speaking in seductive tones to the young Bob Silverberg of a land of milk and honey and naked ladies. It seemed to me even then, just as it had seemed to earlier '49ers, that California was a golden magnet. I hoped some day to visit it. Not live there, just visit it -- that would have been enough. (In 1949 the farthest I had ever been from New York was southern New Jersey.)

Came I to California finally in 1958, the Solacon year. Married by then, already a successful pro, still very young and in many ways foolish, though I didn't think so then. Neither Barbara nor I yet had a driver's license, so we took a bus tour through San Francisco and down the lovely coast to Los Angeles. LA repelled us, San Francisco charmed us -- but we had only a quick taste of each. California!

In those years we were organizing our travels around the worldcons, so we didn't return to California until 1964, the Pacificon year. We saw a lot of Oakland and the Berkeley hills and were snared by the foggy beauty up there, but it still never occurred to us that we might ever live anywhere but New York, the queen city of the western world, the international metropolis, the place where everything was at. The theater, the art galleries, the restaurants, our friends -- how could we ever leave New York? We had roots there. We had a magnificent house there, a dream palace. To move to California, as my old friends Boggs and Grennell had done, as Harlan Ellison and Bob Bloch had done, as Phil Farmer had done -- well, not us.

In 1968 our house was wrecked by a fire. Immediately we began rebuilding it, sparing no cost to restore it to its past glory; after all, we were going to live there the rest of our lives, right? That September, with the rebuilding still going on, we spent a week in California again, centering around the Baycon. How lovely, how strange, how interesting it is here, we said, and flew home to familiar New York. But in the summer of 1969 we went west again. Why? Ostensibly to attend the Westercon and have a vacation; but we were in no need of a vacation, having just gone to Africa a few months before. Bill Rotsler,

who was no longer a casual acquaintance for us but now a close friend, lured us with talk of wild parties. We went -- our first visit to LA in eleven years. We had a wild party, no less. We saw Harlan's house and the Hollywood hills for the first time. It was a dazzling week, a turn-on. When we came home I said to Barbara, "I could almost see myself living out there." She looked at me in amazement. "You're kidding," said she.

But in the spring of 1970 we ~~we~~ found ourselves chez Rotsler again, for an even wilder, happier time. Among other things, we came to know the estimable Paul Turner and laid plans for an eventual back-packing trip in the Sierras together. I began to talk more seriously of going west for keeps. It was LA, oddly, that drew me then -- that abhorrent sprawling non-city. I was attracted by the people, by the hills, by the easygoing smiling psychic atmosphere. And also there was the peculiar pleasure of telling my friends in New York of my perverse wish to settle there; it gave me the same sort of kick that I suppose a good Catholic can get by talking of a conversion to Buddhism. Meanwhile, the decomposition of New York was proceeding at a frightening pace, and, while I wasn't serious enough about thinking of moving -- we were too tied ~~emotionally~~ emotionally to our house -- I began to see us, twenty years hence, as the last members of the middle class left in New York City, smothering under the task of paying the expenses of the whole city budget.

July, 1971: we hiked in the Sierras with Paul and his lady Neola, went to a joyous Noncon at Bill Donaho's place, attended the Westercon, and came home much infected by California-hunger. Privately now I was hoping for an excuse to move: say, the construction of a huge college dormitory in the undeveloped 24-acre tract at the end of Goodridge Avenue, a few hundred yards from our door. But that didn't seem likely. For better or for worse, we were stuck in miserable New York. Everybody we were closest to had escaped, of course. One set of close friends had bought a house near Woodstock, 2½ hours to the north; another pair had fled in the opposite direction; Lee Hoffman, whom we had just begun really to know, took off for Florida; and at the end of the summer Terry and Carol Carr made good on their threat to move to....California.

That really hurt. We were closer to Terry and Carol than to just about anybody, and had been getting closer and closer all the time. A kinship of age, of attitudes, of interests bound us; and because both couples were childless, we were free to go anywhere and do anything on a whim, with no scheduling hassles over babysitters or schools or measles. And they were gone. We looked around and realized we were alone among eight million people. Our college friends had scattered across the continent; our fan friends were likewise gone; and most of the mundane friends we had picked up over the years had gone down the chute into middle age, while we hadn't. Now the anguish began. To move or not to move? How could we sell our beloved house? How could we face the turmoil of dismantling my vast library? We had settled in for a lifetime on Goodridge Avenue -- and to leave was unthinkable. Still, we thought about it. We flew to Berkeley in October, 1971, and were caught by the warmth and friendliness of the fan community there -- real people, good people, many of them people

we had known long ago in the east (Pat and Dick Lupoff, Pat and Dick Ellington, Grania Davidson/Davis, Bill Donaho, the Carrs, and more). "We're going to move eventually," I said. "Two years, three, five -- as soon as we can bring ourselves to break loose." Some people offered sympathy. Some said we'd be moving a lot sooner than we thought. A few said we'd never be able to do it. Secretly I feared we never would. Barbara still dug New York -- her job was here, her friends were here (not our friends, particularly, but hers), and the decay and collapse somehow didn't bother her the way it bothered me. She felt the westward pull, too, but she was able to resist it.

Westward we went again like lemmings in December, 1971 -- our third California flight in five months. This time we cruised through the Bay Area on a quasi-serious search for a place to live, just shopping for a plausible neighborhood, although inwardly we still didn't believe we meant what we said about moving. We found a pretty section of the Oakland hills where the houses seemed to be big enough for our needs. Next spring, we said, we'll come out and start tentatively shopping around, and maybe late in 1973 we'll buy a house here. Sure.

Things happen fast once they start happening. Three weeks after we came home from that December trip, Carol phoned: she had been talking to some real estate brokers, and there was a house we ought to look at if we really meant to move. Next thing we knew -- January 7 -- we were flying west again. We didn't buy the house Carol's broker had turned up for us; it was too big, too seedy, too everything. But we bought another one. Rather, we put in a bid on it. Casually I signed the bidding contract, casually I wrote a thousand-buck check as evidence that I meant it. We flew home on January 10 and within two weeks we had our house. It was that simple. Back we went to California on January 26 -- the commuter run on American Airlines was routine to us by now -- and with no feeling of astonishment I signed the purchase contract, and that was that.

We put our house up for sale early in February, and sold it early in March to two of our mundane friends. We got twice what we paid for it in 1961 -- a good thing, because our new house cost us a shade more than that. I'm now in the midst of packing; moving day is scheduled for about five weeks from now, although it'll be safely in the past, I hope, when this appears. We're both eager to get out of New York, Barbara not quite as eager as I, but enough. This city has died for us. This phase of our lives has died for us. In December, at Rotsler's, I was discussing the psychological problem of breaking loose from New York with Norman Spinrad, and he said, "Everybody ought to be born again every ten years." Exactly so. Born again. A new life in the west -- strange, exotic, California.

I don't believe it.

California. Box 13160 Station E, Oakland 94611. Where do you live, Mr. Silverberg? I live in California.

Jeest. California! Where can I get a good book about earthquakes?